

REMARKS

Upon entry of this amendment, claims 29-36 are pending. Claim 29 is the only independent claim.

Claim rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102 and 103

Claims 4-5, 7-22, 24-26 and 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Castellini EP 734692.

Claims 2-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Castellini EP 734692 in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,253,964 to Rainey.

New Claim 29

New claim 29 defines a system wherein the first sub-branch which supplies a disinfectant/sterilizing fluid starts at a first closure for a first associated container and connects directly with the second sub-branch which supplies sterile fluid from a second associated container immediately downstream of the corresponding second tube, allowing the control means to alternately supply the disinfectant or sterilizing fluid and the sterile fluid along a single first sub-branch connected to the main conduit (see e.g., FIG. 2 of the present disclosure). Castellini EP 734692 fails at least to disclose that the first sub-branch which supplies the disinfectant or sterilizing fluid starts at the corresponding first closure and connects directly with the second sub-branch which supplies the sterile fluid immediately downstream of the corresponding second tube, allowing the control means to alternately supply the disinfectant or sterilizing fluid and the sterile fluid along a single first sub-branch connected to the main conduit.

By contrast, Castellini EP 734692 shows a completely different arrangement of the main conduit and of the sub-branches conduit.

Moreover, Castellini EP 734692 fails to show that the first and second sub-branches are each equipped with a closure used to attach a container containing the fluids to be supplied, and a corresponding tube for each closure. Instead, Castellini shows only one container connected to a sub-branch (from column 5 line 51 to column 6 line 8, figure

1).

Both Detsch et al. documents, (US patent No. 5,526,841 and 6,019,117), fail to show that three different type of liquids (liquid from the main, liquid from the first container, or liquid from the second container) are supplied as needed according to the process being performed with the dental unit. Moreover, both Detsch documents (see for example FIG. 3 of each) clearly fail to disclose that the first sub-branch which supplies the disinfectant or sterilizing fluid starts at the corresponding first closure and connects directly with the second sub-branch which supplies the sterile fluid immediately downstream of the corresponding second tube, allowing the control means to alternately supply the disinfectant or sterilizing fluid and the sterile fluid along a single first sub-branch connected to the main conduit.

Likewise Rainey (US 6253964) fails to disclose at least that a first sub-branch which supplies the disinfectant or sterilizing fluid starts at the corresponding first closure and connects directly with a second sub-branch which supplies the sterile fluid immediately downstream of the corresponding second tube, allowing the control means to alternately supply the disinfectant or sterilizing fluid and the sterile fluid along a single first sub-branch connected to the main conduit.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that none of the cited prior art documents discloses an apparatus as defined by new claim 29. Furthermore, none of the cited documents includes any disclosure or fair suggestion of the apparatus defined in new claim 29 and, as such, it is respectfully submitted that new claim 29 is nonobvious over the cited prior art, whether taken alone or in combination.

The dependent claims (claims 30-26) include additional limitations that are not disclosed or fairly suggested in any document of record. It is respectfully submitted that these are allowable as being dependent on claim 29 and also based upon their respective additional limitations.

In view of the above, it is believed that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102 and 103 have been overcome, and that new claims 29-36 are in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

The applicant respectfully requests entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration of the application, and the allowance of the pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'St - H', is written over a horizontal line.

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